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## ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the political role and the political self-definition of researchers in the field of comparative education in East and West Germany in the post World War II period. The study addresses some of the general assumptions made about comparative education bridging the gap between cultures but asserts that none of these assumptions is supported by the available evidence in divided Germany. Comparative education became a tool of the political parties to foster nationalism or chauvinism, militarism, expansionism for awhile, and had generally accepted warfare as the basic mode of existence. Comparative education in East and West Germany systematically built up a theoretical framework for producing disinformation and propaganda, each side stressing the uniqueness and superiority of its own system and each claiming the enemy to be highly successful only in manipulating and indoctrinating the youth of its country. Contains 66 references. (EH)

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by Theodor Sander

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# Cold War and the Politics of Comparative Education - the case of divided Germany

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**Abstract:** This paper deals with the political role and the political self-definition of researchers in the field of Comparative Education in East and West Germany in the post-war period. There is an implicit and apparently wide-spread assumption about Comparative Education in general that it is (or at least could be) concerned with bridging gaps between different cultures, emphasizing the relevance and the value of common traditions in education across boundaries of nation states, promoting understanding for the reality and the problems of various education systems abroad, supporting transnational co-operation between education institutions, teacher educators and teachers, fostering a general climate of tolerance and good-will between persons and institutions involved and contributing to a better understanding of one's own education system, its particular successes and failures as well as its major problems.

However, none of these assumptions is supported by the available evidence. The development of Comparative Education in a divided Germany after 1945 is particularly revealing in this respect, without actually representing an anomaly. In fact Comparative Education on both sides of the Iron Curtain was deeply involved in a sordid and ruthless propaganda war serving wider purposes of the Cold War policy on which the two superpowers and with them the countries in their respective 'sphere of influence' had converged after the end of the Second World War. Comparative Education in East and West Germany was deeply imbued with the spirit of nationalism or chauvinism, militarism, for a long time also expansionism, and it had generally accepted warfare as the basic mode of existence, as a reasonable way of defining international relations in a capitalist world order. If it was not military warfare for which it supplied ideological justifications and supports, then at least it was industrial, commercial, financial warfare. If both sides seemed to fight tooth and nails against nothing but the external enemy, they were both confronting and fighting also the same internal enemy - the working class and its striving for self-liberation and autonomy.

While in fact capitalist class societies existed on both sides of the Iron Curtain, Cold War ideology propagated the existence of two completely different (education) systems based on completely different assumptions. Thus, Comparative Education in East and West Germany systematically built up a theoretical framework for producing desinformation and propaganda, each side stressing the uniqueness and superiority of its own system and each side claiming the enemy to be highly successful only in one particular respect, namely in manipulating and indoctrinating the youth of its country. As the reality and the functioning of class society was strictly ignored on both sides, Comparative Education cultivated myths of national unity, national identity and the construction of socialism or democratic pluralism, thus drawing the boundaries for defining and denouncing its enemies, external as well as internal.

# 1. Cold War and the general political situation in divided Germany

## 1.1. The new superpowers and Cold War policy

The Second World War produced two qualitative changes in the alignment of dominant world powers. Firstly it led to the military defeat of two important rivals to the United States. The defeat of Japan opened up the remainder of the Pacific to US influence and the defeat of Germany left no question that the United States would from now on be the undisputed dominant world power industrially and technologically but also in terms of military and financial power. Secondly the war so weakened the industrial and financial base of America's allies that all the old European imperial powers - France, Belgium, the Netherlands and, above all, Britain - were forced to accept an at best subordinate status and, at worst, the status of American surrogate in international affairs.

The defeat of Germany and Japan had been in little doubt from at least the end of 1942 when it had become apparent that Russia could absorb the entire military might of the German army and survive. It was then only a matter of time before the overwhelming economic power of the Allies would crush the axis powers. From the very start, therefore, each allied ruling class was concerned - if not even obsessed - with the question of power in the post-war world. As the war progressed this question came to occupy a larger and larger proportion of their attention. How did the ruling classes of what were to become the two superpowers of the post-war world order fight out this battle between allies? By 1943, and after much violent debate between Britain and the US, a common war strategy had been concluded that enabled there to be a fairly common front against their Russian rival in the remaining two war years. The Americans agreed to make Europe the major priority, but successfully insisted that Churchill's plans for a major thrust in areas of past and present British influence in the Mediterranean be dropped in favour of the invasion of Northern Europe. As the end of the war drew nearer and as few doubts were left as to the defeat of Germany and Japan, the main aim of the Western Allies became a policy preventing expansion of Russia into the major part of Europe and the rest of the world.

However, there was also a great deal of consent between all the Allies, Russia included, in many fundamental matters. Each accepted that notwithstanding the aspirations of the indigenous populations in reconquered Europe they were to be forcibly included in one or another 'sphere of influence', with the nature of the regime that presided over them being determined by whichever great power they had been consigned to. From late 1943 onwards Europe began to be de facto divided into Eastern and Western 'spheres of influence' (see e.g. BURNHAM 1947; MCNEILL 1953; FEIS 1957; STERNBERG 1961; SNELL 1963; SMITH 1965; TRUCHANOWSKI 1965; KOLKO 1968; ISSRAELIAN 1975; KAUFMAN 1976; ZANAKOJEW/ZYBULEWSKI 1978). A number of factors contributed to this situation, among others the Italian example (where the US government had refused any kind of codetermination of Italy's future in conjunction with the other allied governments) which was soon followed by the Western allies being forced to accept equivalent rights for the Russians in Rumania. Then there was the Western rejection of the Russian proposals for a European Advisory Commission to administer the whole of occupied Europe. Apart from that events moved very fast in 1944-45. Without prior agreements as to how the newly reconquered areas were to be ruled, the Russian side was faced with the de-facto supremacy of the West in France, the rest of Western Europe and the Far East, and the West was faced with Russian supremacy in Eastern Europe.

Even if it is not evident at first sight when the Cold War actually began, it would be wrong to assume that it developed slowly and unsystematically after the end of the war. Basically there could be no doubt about the long tradition of an imperialist drive of the US ruling class, and the Second World War had in fact fully confirmed the existence of this drive (STERNBERG 1951; PERLO 1952; MNOGOLETOWA 1955; WEINBERG 1935/1963; WILLIAMS 1969; JULIEN 1969; KOLKO 1969; HOROWITZ 1971; WILLIAMS 1972a; WILLIAMS 1972b; KÜNTZEL 1974; KOLKO 1976; WILLIAMS 1980). They surely acted in the belief that they had to maintain the most powerful armed forces in the world so as to be able to ward off threats to their position as a leading economic and financial world power. In fact it was clear that threats were seen as originating from a number of different sources, whether from so called national liberation movements, from Soviet Russian moves, or from the other Western capitalisms taking measures that would interfere with the unimpeded functioning of the US multinationals and banks. Considering the course which Soviet Russia had taken since 1917 it is impossible to ignore how an imperialist drive developed in a way which was absolutely symmetrical to that of the Western powers (GLUCKSTEIN 1952; DEUTSCHER 1960; DEUTSCHER 1966; DEUTSCHER 1970; HOROWITZ 1970; CLIFF 1974; HARMAN 1974; CLIFF 1982; BINNS 1983; BINNS/CLIFF/HARMAN 1987). In the end Russia was imitating since the end of the 1920s much of the process of creating Western military potential - building up heavy industry through squeezing the living standards of workers and peasants and ploughing back the surplus value so obtained into accumulation. The particular role which the State and arms production came to play in Russia certainly reflected the state of economic backwardness and an attempt to overcome this state in competition with the leading capitalist nations. But once such methods were adopted and in part successful, it was logical to copy Western developmental trends in other ways as well - to reach out beyond the USSR's borders for further resources for accumulation. Hence the deal around the Baltic States and the division of Poland with Germany in 1939, hence also the eagerness to participate in the division of the whole of Europe with Britain and America in 1944-45.

The division itself was still done by agreement up to the Potsdam conference in 1945 (acknowledging of course simple military facts) and the agreement included also a decision, taken at the Yalta conference in the previous year, on the carve-up of the occupied nations between them and in particular on the division of Germany. But very soon afterwards the new superpowers came to completely disagree about the way these zones and the two 'spheres of influence' in general were to be administered. From Potsdam and Hiroshima onwards the leaders of both America and Russia were defining the other quite unambiguously as enemy number one. In 1947, for example, the Communist Parties were thrown out of the government coalitions in France and Italy and the Eastern European countries threw out the non-CP politicians, created one-party states, and proceeded to construct capitalist regimes in the image of Soviet Russia itself. 1948 saw the Berlin blockade and airlift, the first direct but 'cold' confrontation between Russia and America out of which the rival military pacts were then formed. Finally in 1949 the German division was cemented by the Western Allies agreeing to the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany on their occupied territory and the Russians following suit with their agreement to or active promotion of the foundation of the German Democratic Republic (see e.g. BURCHETT 1950; BADSTÜBNER 1966; BADSTÜBNER/THOMAS 1975; DEUTSCHER 1980).

The most characteristic features of the first Cold War were clearest in the years which followed these events - the early 1950s (see e.g. APTHEKER 1962; HOROWITZ 1965; ALPEROWITZ 1967; HOROWITZ 1967a; HOROWITZ 1967b; STEEL 1967; SPANIER 1971; KOLKO 1972; LAFEVER 1980; COX 1986). They are generally thought of as the high water mark of the first Cold War.



In those years the immense power of American capital was used to construct a world order which was meant to provide the framework for the perpetuation of the wartime boom into the post-war period. It consisted of several interconnected and mutually supporting elements; crucially it depended on American capitalism being dominant at global level in three areas - industrial production, finance and commerce, and the military. It included a strategy of turning West Germany into a front-line state against what was erroneously termed Eastern 'communism', just as Russia attempted at turning East Germany into a showcase for the ideological and material superiority of what they for their part mistakenly termed 'communism' but which was in fact just a different brand of capitalism based on exploitation and surplus value production. On the other hand Soviet Russia had numerous problems which were quite different from those of the United States. The infrastructure of Russian industry was completely shattered by the war and it could not hope to be able to compete with the Americans in terms of production, trade and finance, although they made every effort to do so at the level of arms production. Accumulation in order to match the arms potential of their rival turned out to be an endless self-perpetuating process. Every success in expanding the industrial base of armaments only spurred the rival to do the same. The arms budget had to be steadily increased in order to hold together a ramshackle empire already groaning under the consequences of the growing arms burden (the shortages of food and consumer goods). In the late 1940s and early 1950s Soviet Russia's strategy of lessening the burden on its own population consisted in massively squeezing out reparations in kind and in money from the occupied countries in Eastern Europe. Czechoslovakia and East Germany as highly developed industrial nations suffered particularly from the policy of reparations. However, this policy could not be upheld in the face of growing opposition movements everywhere in the East and had been largely abandoned by the mid-1950s.

Cold War policy was never given up a single minute by either side since the end of the Second World War, even though the forms of conducting such a policy did change over the years. With the enormous emphasis on arms production (15-20 per cent of GNP in the United States, 25 per cent of GNP in Soviet Russia) both superpowers, and to a lesser degree the countries within their 'sphere of influence', laid the base for systematically destroying the conditions for continued and relatively stable growth. The entire post-war period since 1945 is characterised by the tendential decline of growth rates in the United States and in Soviet Russia as well as in all countries belonging to either 'camp', East and West Germany included. Thus, there is nothing like a boom of unprecedented length suddenly breaking off for some mysterious and unexplained reasons in the mid-1970s, as is mostly argued by 'critical' and uncritical observers alike, and this is easy for everyone to see (cf. data for East and West Germany in table 1). There is only a more or less continuous decline on both sides, and we know by now that the crisis of the Eastern branch of capitalism has taken on such catastrophic forms that any idea of successfully maintaining the Cold War policy had to be given up. This does not mean that the war is over.

## **1.2. Phases in the development of the Cold War**

Against the background of subsequent phases of tendential, long-term decline and the recurring problems it generated for the Eastern and Western side at an ever higher level it becomes possible to interpret and understand the changing forms of the Cold War. If the six years from 1950 to 1956 were the high point of the first Cold War, the next six, 1956 to 1962, considerably modified it. Although imperialist rivalry and military competition between the ruling classes of Russia and America remained a permanent feature of the post-war world, it became gradually clear during this latter period that the arms race could not be continued as before. While it is usually stressed that a balance of (military) power had been achieved

between East and West, it is no less important to take account of the devastating economic crisis into which Soviet Russia and with it the entire Eastern bloc had entered by the beginning of the 1960s, with absolutely no guarantee for survival. While the situation was not as dramatic in the United States and in the Western bloc in general, it was visible that the situation was becoming more and more critical for them as well.

The beginning of what is generally called the period of 'detente' (see e.g. BRAUNMÜHL 1973; BARNET 1977; GREINER 1980) thus coincides with the dramatic crisis of the Eastern branch of capitalism which had no parallel until the mid-1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. The period of transition to 'detente' lasting roughly until the mid-1970s consisted of several main features. Firstly, the recognition of the other superpower's 'sphere of influence' took on a more overt form sometimes being described as 'superpower hegemonism' or as 'Wodka-Cola policy' (LEVINSON 1978). The American and Russian ruling classes at that time were very careful to localise any conflicts and to prevent them from interfering with the slowly developing trade and financial links between Russia and the West. Secondly, none of these conflicts was allowed to alter the general trend towards decreasing armaments expenditure. Even though a permanent arms economy still existed with armaments occupying a percentage which was five or ten times greater than before the war, the overall tendency was for a slight decline in the arms sector. Thirdly, in the context of the post-war economic decline of the superpowers there arose new challenges to both Russia and America as the links between them and the other members of their 'camp' began to weaken and as competition within the respective 'camps' continued to intensify. It was in this phase of 'detente' that for the first time growing 'peaceful coexistence' links acquired international political recognition in a whole series of summit meetings and arms control treaties, with treaties following thick and fast from 1967 onwards.

'Detente' is of course a very much misleading concept (MELMAN 1985), not only because the measures agreed upon were largely cosmetic and as each one of these measures did not threaten (and actually rather enhanced) the military profile of the superpowers. Most of the test ban treaties were, after all, directed against newcomers impinging on the 'natural preserve' of the superpowers. More importantly the slogan of 'detente' hides the simple fact that economic and financial war between the Eastern and Western side was even stepped up massively since the mid-1960s. Trade links between the blocs developed extremely rapidly, especially between Western Europe and the East (e.g. exports to Russia from West Germany expanded more than five times from 1970 to 1975). In addition there was a massive expansion of Western credit to the Eastern European countries (though much less to Russia itself) which might have been seen already as the famous writing on the wall, i.e. a clear sign of the weakness of the Eastern capitalism. From insignificant sums this credit grew to such an extent that in the later part of the 1970s countries like Rumania and Hungary - and above all Poland - were owing Western banks many billions of dollars.

The Eastern and the Western branches of capitalism were again severely hit by the deep crises of 1974-75 and 1980-82. Once more the prevailing forms of Cold War policy were seriously modified. The problem that the Russian and American ruling classes faced was that 'detente' had not produced the desired results (BARNET 1983). The late 1970s saw America being overtaken by Japan as the largest exporter of manufactured goods. American productivity growth also continued to lag still further behind its competitors in Western Europe and the Far East. Even when profits did temporarily rise this did not lead to increased investment in American industry, but rather, via the increased activity of the international banks, into speculation or productive investment elsewhere.

The Russian ruling class faced similar problems, although the situation had already deteriorated in a way which made fundamental solutions seem very difficult. Any more permanent solution would have required an increasing participation in the world division of labour which Russia had largely avoided so far. Only this would have permitted the Eastern ruling class to acquire the advanced technology that they needed to modernise production in industry and agriculture. Estimates in these years showed for example that productivity in East Germany lagged behind that of West Germany by 30 to 50 per cent on average. The ruling classes in the Eastern bloc countries did try the avenue of modernising production from 1975 to 1981 - but with disastrous results. In an attempt to create export-oriented industrial plant during the years of easy credit in the late 1970s, they borrowed heavily on the international finance market to purchase the investment goods required. Their heavy borrowing contributed to rising interest rates which in turn weakened their position in the slump of the 1980s. They were left with massively increased foreign debts and a collapsing international market for their goods. It was revealed years later that East Germany was on the brink of collapse in 1982 and was only saved by a huge credit from the West German government. By this time it was clear that the weakness of Eastern capitalism had become a cause for concern for its Western competitors.

For both the American and the Russian bloc ruling classes, then, 'detente' - whatever it was meant to achieve - had gone badly wrong. It was the United States returning first to a new build-up of military strength since 1977 which was widely interpreted to be the beginning of a 'New Cold War' (e.g. CHOMSKY 1973/1982; CHOMSKY/STEELE/GITTINGS 1982; BINNS 1983). But this policy appears to have vied rather the competitors of the superpowers within their respective 'camp' challenging the established economic and financial world order. In the 1950s, 1960s and the early 1970s, the burden of the arms economy was largely carried in the West by the United States, with Britain, then France and West Germany carrying a somewhat lesser burden in relation to their GNPs. In the 'detente' period in particular few other countries could be induced to invest in military resources for the Western alliance. The much more sharpened offensive profile of the USA in the later part of the 1970s and the 1980s was designed to change all that, too. The 1978 NATO meeting thus ended up with all its members committing themselves to a minimum of 3 per cent per year real increases in armaments. It is evident that the biggest arms producers of the world located mainly in the US were the first to benefit from such a decision, giving them a new lease of life, although not permanently.

At the end of the 1980s it became clear that the capitalist regimes in the East were unable to continue as in the past. Attempts to keep up with the most advanced technology internationally increasingly proved to be too expensive and often ineffective, if not impossible in the face of more and more rigid working-class opposition. The growing lag in technology had important effects in three areas. Firstly, there were deficiencies when it came to employing the most advanced means of production. Increasingly advanced information technology and engineering equipment could only be obtained by buying them in the West. But that meant somehow getting hold of the foreign currency to buy them with, assuming of course that they were not on the Western powers' Cocom list of embargoed export goods. Secondly, it was increasingly difficult to sustain the burden of advanced weapons production. The USSR succeeded, at least until the mid-1980s, in matching Western military technology, but only by raiding the rest of the economy for resources. Finally, even where the regimes more or less successful in satisfying workers' basic material consumption requirements (food, clothing, housing, alcoholic drink), as in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, they could not prevent growing dissatisfaction over the cost and quality of consumer durables and, even more importantly, over working conditions.



Thus, at the end of the 1980s the capitalist regimes of Eastern Europe all cracked apart very rapidly in the face of increasingly stronger competition from capitalist giants in the West (HARMAN 1989; HARMAN 1990; REES 1990; CALLINICOS 1991). The way in which the dramatic collapse of these regimes has been tied to utopias of a better life for all in a „free market economy“ and a „democratic society“ seems to be rather a very bad joke. Regardless of the situation in individual countries, one thing stands out clearly in any serious examination of the real problems involved: the gap between what the great mass of workers expect from the changes and what they are actually likely to get. The East European countries border on the most prosperous of the West European states and people have come to equate the Western form of capitalism with Scandinavian or West German living standards. But such living standards are just not available for something like 95 per cent of the Eastern population, for the vast majority not even poor living standards as they have been used to in the past, and it is difficult to imagine how a violent clash over such developments could be avoided.

So far the Western branch of capitalism assumed to be victorious in the Cold War between East and West does not seem to be prepared for presenting a single solution to these problems. Quite the contrary - while still being triumphant over its purported victory, Western capitalism has been affected in the years 1990 to 1993 by the worst crisis it has ever suffered in the entire post-war period. Just now it is sliding into the next, perhaps even deeper crisis and the most violent attacks on the working class in the West have multiplied rapidly in recent years, with predictable results. Consequently Western capitalism is being forced to abandon half the capitalist world to its fate, not without having squeezed out the last bit of profit and having plundered the last piece of usable raw materials from the Eastern countries. Such policy is far from being identical with the end of the Cold War - rather Cold War policy is now promoted feverishly not only on the international scene but also pursued with much more vigour and brutality on the home front.

## 2. The politics of Comparative Education in East Germany

### 2.1. Facing the West German enemy: The alleged triumph of capitalist manipulation in and through the education system

In a study of the West German education crisis published in 1967 East German researchers critically noted that even at this time, more than twenty years after the end of the war, there was nothing like a comprehensive study on the historical development of the West German education system since 1945 (DPZI 1967, p. 30). There were isolated book titles on the policies of Social Democracy in education (LEMM 1962; DIERE 1964), on imperialist and militarist education (AUSSCHUB FÜR DEUTSCHE EINHEIT 1960; DPZI 1960; KÖNIG 1962), on partnership education as a political concept (HOFMANN 1965a), on education policies of the capitalist monopolies (HOFMANN 1966), there were also some basic contributions to larger works on progressive and reactionary tendencies in the development of schooling since 1945 (BECKER/BEYER/HOFMANN 1962), on education for work (AUTORENKOLLEKTIV 1971, pp. 152ff.) and there was a chapter on the development of education in East and West Germany in the GDR standard textbook on the history of education (GÜNTHER u.a. 1971, pp. 624ff.). Indeed these publications did not add up to a comprehensive picture at all. But this does not mean that Comparative Education had not developed a clear image of the enemy. There were in fact regular reports and analyses in the leading educational journals like „Pädagogik“, „Die neue Schule“, „Vergleichende Pädagogik“, „Beiträge zur Schulpolitik und Pädagogik des Auslands“, „Pädagogische Forschung“, „Berufsbildung“, „Forschung der sozialistischen Berufsbildung“, „Das Hochschulwesen“. While in the 1950s this may still have been rather a

trickle, it became a massive flood indicating a certain preoccupation with opposing the education system of East Germany to that of West Germany of researchers from the end of the 1950s onwards.

The history of Comparative Education in East Germany testifies to the existence of vast and systematic efforts at fueling the Cold War with propaganda stories concocted by authors showing a complete disregard for the class reality of the West German education system and the development of West German class society in general, although regularly claiming to critically analyse it.

In a publication dating from the year 1962 three leading East German authors stated e.g.:

„The old class-based German school which helped prepare two imperialist wars through maintaining the traditional educational privilege and through providing a militarist education in the service of German monopoly capital was further developed [in West Germany] after 1945 and the entire education and training of young people was subordinated to the aims of psychological warfare as formulated by the Bonn ultras. The fascist and antisemitic excesses of West German youth, the growth of juvenile delinquency and hooliganism, manifesting itself among others in provocative behaviour of thoroughly indoctrinated young people at the border of the GDR, in particular after 13 August [1961], are the result of education in West German schools being aligned with the interests of West German imperialism and militarism.“ (BECKER/BEYER/HOFMANN 1962, p. 82 - my translation)

Assuming that this description of the education of West German youth and the resulting attitudes could be seen as being valid for perhaps something like 5 per cent of the relevant age groups (and this is certainly a very generous estimate), the question remains why the other 95 per cent undergoing the same kind of education „in the service of West German imperialism and militarism“ did not fall victim to the same kind of moral and intellectual deformation. It is obvious that Comparative Education in East Germany had no answer to this question and apparently was not even interested in it.

Hence it does not come as a complete surprise that Comparative Education in the GDR failed to develop an elementary understanding of the protest movement of apprentices, school children and students which erupted in West Germany only a few years later and soon developed into a full-blown class-based movement of resistance and opposition to schooling and education at all levels. Thus, for example, participants to a joint conference of researchers from the Akademie der Pädagogischen Wissenschaften of the GDR and Akademija Pedagogičeskich Nauk of the USSR in 1971 produced numerous detailed reports on the anticommunist indoctrination of working class youth and of those attending school in West Germany but the then current protest movement being the object of a single contribution to the conference appeared to be coming out of the blue in the face of the demonization of the functional aspects of the education system and the effects allegedly produced by it (APW DER DDR/APW DER UDSSR 1972). There was a complete inability to understand the ongoing transformation of the West German education system and its causes.

The reasons for such inability will be more easily understood, if we take into consideration the fact that the analysis of the West German education system rested firmly on the basic hypothesis of the state developing an all-embracing and highly efficient strategy of manipulation aimed at young people. The pedagogical process of teaching and learning in schools had degenerated - according to this particular hypothesis - „into state monopolistic regulation of the ideological orientation of young people and into a thorough manipulation of

their minds“; correspondingly pedagogics as a branch of scientific thinking and analysis formed part of a wider „theory of social regulation and manipulation“ (MAHR 1969, p. 1058).

An analysis of the structural features of this hypothesis of all-embracing manipulation reveals that we are faced with three fundamental aspects of what might be termed the „classical“, the „standard“ version of manipulation theory. They include assumptions about

- the power, cunning and resourcefulness of the manipulators,
- the masses passively undergoing manipulation,
- the enlightened elite being called upon to carry the light into the masses.

Reflecting on these aspects of the „classical“ version it is impossible to ignore the degree of admiration - not just of disgust and hatred - which in spite of all criticism levelled against the West German education system Comparative Education in the GDR showed for what they saw as an apparatus of solid and permanent class domination based on manipulation and as a leadership with seemingly endless capabilities of manipulation, for what they regarded as the exercise of extraordinary power and as expressions of mean but skillful strategies on the side of individual manipulators or groups of manipulators.

This particular view found expression in the idea of state monopolist capitalism working systematically and untiringly since the 1950s with the aim of establishing a comprehensive system of governance and regulation in the education sector serving nothing but the purposes of the capitalist class (UHLIG 1959; KRAHN 1959; HOFMANN 1965b; HOFMANN 1966a; STOLZ 1966; BECKER u.a. 1967; HOFMANN 1968; DELITZ 1968; WETTSTÄDT 1969; GEIST 1969; BECKER/SAREIK 1969). According to the official terminology of the GDR state monopoly capitalism was defined as the fusion of the power of the capitalist monopolies with that of the state. In this terminology the anonymous power of capital as a system of social relations was replaced by the personal power exercised by representatives of employers' organisations and state institutions, the laws of motion of capital by the will of the dominant class and their alleged ability of regulating society according to their will, class antagonism by the simple dualism of power and powerlessness or an equally simple hierarchy of power with order givers and order takers, the unity and opposition of bourgeois society and the state by capitalist command over the state and its activities, etc.

Correspondingly the attention of Comparative Education strictly focused on the „influence of the biggest monopoly groups on the school system“, with the influence being interpreted as deriving simply and automatically from what monopoly groups (e.g. BDA, BDI and their respective organisations dealing with education policy: Bildungspolitische Abteilung des DII, Arbeitskreis Schule und Wirtschaft, Ettlinger Kreis, Ruhr-Seminar, Walter-Raymond-Stiftung, september-Gesellschaft etc.) would like to achieve and had publicly declared as their political aims and objectives in various publications. The monopoly groups were described as being in close contact with a large number of central institutions at the level of governmental and quasi-governmental activity (Bundesinnenministerium, Bundesministerium für gesamtdeutsche Fragen, Kuratorium Unteilbares Deutschland, Beirat Innere Führung beim Bundesverteidigungsministerium, Internationales Schulbuchinstitut, Deutscher Ausschuß für das Erziehungs- und Bildungswesen and Deutscher Bildungsrat respectively, etc.). Their influence was believed to be such that the political influence of governmental and quasi-governmental institutions was more and more relegated to second rank, the institutions playing only a „subordinate role“ in the comprehensive system of central social regulation. Increasingly they had transformed into a mere „transmission belt“ for the big battalions of monopoly capitalism and the ruling class.

Indeed Comparative Education insisted on the „bourgeois class-based school“ in West Germany becoming the very centre of the manipulation of youth in a wider social context (HOFMANN 1964; HOFMANN 1966b; DPZI 1967; BECKER/SAREIK 1969), educating in the spirit of fascism (GERTH/HERRMANN 1960), militarism (REGENER 1959; BECKER/HOFMANN 1959; LINKE 1959; BAUERMANN/VOIGT 1960; HOFMANN 1960; STOLZ 1960; RADTKE 1960; MÜLLER 1966), anticommunism (STOLZ 1957; BEYER/HUB 1964; GIRBIG 1967; RUMMERT 1968; FISCHER 1969; GIRBIG 1970), elitism (LAUTERBACH 1960), antidemocratic thinking (PFAUTZ 1959) and clerical ideology (MAHR 1960). Even where Comparative Education phrased its critique in a way that it seemed to be aware of dealing with nothing but „intentions“ and „objectives“ of monopoly capitalists, there was an implicit assumption that these could be seen as being more or less identical with „results“ and „effects“:

„The fundamental aim of education policy and school education in a system based on manipulation consists in subjecting all those still attending school by every possible means to the class interests of the dominating class, to turn them into a mentally deformed mass, to systematically destroy their personality, to mobilize them completely for anticommunist positions and to immunize them against the persuasive power of socialist ideas. In the system of manipulation school has been assigned two basic tasks: It is called upon to train a kind of citizen being submissive, being conformist with regard to the requirements of profit production, being actively engaged in defending anticommunist and nationalist orientations, and at the same time striving for higher performance, displaying a greater readiness for sacrifice and showing a higher political commitment on the basis of an anticommunist ideology, always being prepared for acts of aggression and diversion against the socialist states.“ (HOFMANN 1972, p. 94 - my translation)

Comparative Education was not seriously interested in analysing whether these were the actual attitudes and beliefs of young people in West Germany or not, whether these were orientations which were passively and obediently accepted or which at best elicited cynical and disinterested responses, whether submissiveness and acceptance of dominant ideology were taught in efficient ways to vast numbers of young people or rather provoked counterproductive effects. While the effects of imperialist education seemed to be related directly and naturally to the will of members of monopoly capitalist groups (or the state), young people were portrayed as not having a will of their own or an ability of independent thinking or a tendency to revolt against a system based on indoctrination. Their status was assumed to be that of an indifferent mass which was nothing but the object of manipulation and thus bound to fall victim to capitalist strategies of ideological corruption and integration.

The basic assumption that young people could be manipulated at will by capitalist interests is reinforced by a third factor: The „victims“ of manipulation were seen as being in a state of helplessness from which there was no escape except with the support of certain „helpers“ or „leaders“. Actually this distinction reflected the dualism of „oppressors“ and „oppressed“, of manipulators and the manipulated. The sanctified host of helpers/leaders, being given the collective name of „democratic forces in West Germany“, included not only the Deutsche Kommunistische Partei and the Deutsche Friedens-Union but also the Demokratischer Kulturbund Westdeutschlands, the Schwelmer Kreis (all of them part of the fifth column of the SED in West Germany) as well as the GEW and the DGB-Jugend. However, by far the most important factor was considered to be the growing influence on the West German education system exercised by the education system of the GDR and more generally by the growing „attractiveness“ of the Eastern side in the „confrontation of systems“, i.e. the confrontation between the Eastern and the Western branch of capitalism. The concept of „enlightening“ and



„leading“ the masses in West Germany to liberation presupposed an entirely hierarchical relationship between „victims“ and „leaders/helpers“, with leaders somehow mysteriously having the special privilege of a „correct perception“ of the world and an „adequate knowledge“ how to change it and thus being happily immune against the totalitarian demands of integration put on everyone by state monopolist strategies of manipulation.

Only in a very superficial sense could this kind of „enlightenment“ promising to rescue the youth of West Germany from the claws of monopoly capitalism be seen as an act of solidarity with the oppressed and manipulated, as seems to be shining through in specific formulations like „the betrayed masses“. Any kind of positive judgement dissipates into the air once we look deeper into what „leaders“ regarded as the cause of the alleged deficits in the attitudes and behaviour of young people. Compassion with the „ideologically corrupted“ and „enslaved“ youth inevitably took on the form of an insult as they were clearly held guilty for their unerring slave mentality and for their not offering sufficient resistance to manipulation. At the same time „enlightenment“ itself had nothing positive to offer, confronting „manipulated“ young people with the pseudo-alternative of suffering totalitarian manipulation by the monopoly bourgeoisie or taking up the fight for imaginary democracy under the self-styled leadership of a splinter party without the slightest backing in the West German population.

The concept of manipulation stands in sharp contrast with the theoretical bases of Marxism and the social practice which it reflects and analyses. Although it was verbally acknowledged that West Germany was a class society, Comparative Education in the GDR was completely out of touch with the reality of class antagonism in West Germany. The theory of capitalist class society and its specific dynamic had degenerated into a primitive sociology of power and domination strangely resembling specific forms of functionalist sociology in the West. From publications dating from the last years of the GDR it becomes evident that Comparative Education had arrived at a point where its descriptions (see e.g. SPECKMANN 1984; MALKEWA/HOFMANN/WULFSON 1986; AKADEMIE DER PÄDAGOGISCHEN WISSENSCHAFTEN DER DDR 1986; JOHN u.a. 1987) had become a useless and meaningless collection of standardised, sterile, hollow propaganda phrases.

## **2.2. Superiority of the East German battalions: The myth of constructing socialism**

For many decades the dominant view on the East German and West German education systems was that of two completely diverse entities, existing side by side but representing fundamental alternatives as to the meaning and assumptions, practices and processes, functions and outcomes of education. In this respect the Eastern and Western sides were always quite unanimous. The self-image of the GDR was based on the firm conviction that its education system had inherited the best traditions of progressive bourgeois ideas and had successfully combined them with the pedagogical ideas and experiences of the German and international socialist working-class movement from the days of Karl Marx down to the present (e.g. KANZLEI DES STAATSRATES DER DDR 1965, p. 11). It was seen as having dealt rigorously with the legacy of national socialism, tearing out the social roots of fascism, imperialism and militarism once and forever. And it was believed to have developed from the antifascist-democratic order of the first post-war years into the education system of a society laying the bases of socialism and then proceeding to the comprehensive construction of socialism.

In short, the education system of the GDR was regarded as being vastly superior to that of West Germany and this kind of pride in its achievements often expressed by researchers was maintained up to 1989 and even beyond. If not always mentioned expressly, the alleged superiority of the East German education system concerned the following aspects:



- *Planning vs. market mechanism.* Educational planning in the former GDR was an important part of the overall planning mechanism, comprising planning of production and productivity, of the labour force and of new recruits from the education system (e.g. GÜNTHER/UHLIG 1970; KLEIN 1974, pp. 91ff.). Voluminous plans were elaborated regularly by a highly inflated corps of planning bureaucrats. In this very superficial sense the education system of the former GDR was labelled as a planned system. The central and decisive problem is of course whether real developments of the education system were in any way regulated through the existing planning mechanisms or not. It has been demonstrated that this was never the case, neither at the level of planning quantitative recruitment of labour for various sectors and branches of the economy, nor at the level of planning for qualification levels, nor at the level of financial planning (SANDER 1983). Indeed it has been argued that regulation of the education system through planning was perfectly impossible under conditions prevailing in the former GDR, and thus educational planning was bound to remain a matter of no more than building castles in the sand and cherishing illusions about the beneficial effects of planning.
- *Centrally directed vs. uncontrolled, chaotic developments in a decentralised system.* It has been generally assumed that the education system of the former GDR was under the control of the Party, the Ministry and the Akademie der Pädagogischen Wissenschaften acting in the interest and on behalf of the working class (GÜNTHER/UHLIG 1970; KLEIN/REISCHOCK 1971; BASIKOW u.a. 1989). Political activities of these institutions were invariably seen as following a rational pattern, centres of decision-making were thought of as being well-informed about all the necessary details (taking a realistic view of problems and their origins), party and government elites were regarded as being homogeneous - and society appeared as reacting on the basis of consent and positive support. However, none of these assumptions has stood the test of critical analysis (SANDER 1983). In fact it has been demonstrated how very little the central bureaucracy knew about the reality and the complexities of the educational system in particular and the social system in general. Above all there was never a clear-cut, straightforward relationship between political aims and political actions, the bureaucracy continuously acting against the declared interests of its own plans and programmes. The kind of unitary command imagined by researchers was not exercised by the Politbureau or the Central Committee of the SED but rather by the harsh realities of the GDR's long-term economic decline. Beyond that, looking at power structures and the mechanisms of decision-making, it could hardly be disputed that there was a number of different decision-making centres in the former GDR, often radically opposing or outmanoeuvring each other, with the top level of the party and the government very seldom exerting the strongest influence in a complicated power game.
- *Social equality/education as a human right vs. class inequality.* One of the fundamental claims still being repeated over and over again by defenders of the education system of the former GDR concerns the alleged advantages of the educational system for guaranteeing social equality/equal opportunity to everyone, specifically to working-class children (e.g. KLEIN/REISCHOCK 1971; BASIKOW u.a. 1989). But educational non-discrimination in the former GDR is a myth which was long ago debunked by (largely unpublished and for a long time inaccessible) research of the East German Akademie der Pädagogischen Wissenschaften and of the Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung undertaken since the late 1960s.

At the same time experience in the West with comprehensive school systems (in particular in the U.S.A., Great Britain, Sweden and West Germany) has taught us a great deal about the impossibility of achieving only equal opportunity through structural reforms, or through

schools and formal education in general. Even comprehensive school systems tend to faithfully reproduce the existing social structures. No wonder, then, that the importance of class background relative to other sources of variation in educational attainment does not appear to have diminished at all in the former GDR. However, all this very traditional discussion of social selectivity still contains too many elements of fundamentally affirmative thinking and reformist policies based on social-democratic ideas of „equal representation“ (SANDER 1991). The basic act of social discrimination against the working class and of attempted social control lies in the very existence of schools and compulsory schooling, not in their different content and forms which tend to develop in class societies (SANDER 1983). Dual system of education ...

- *Comprehensive school vs. differentiated, vertically structured school system.* The non-differentiated comprehensive school is usually regarded as putting into practice the principles of equality and social justice (e.g. GÜNTHER/UHLIG 1970; KLEIN/REISCHOCK 1971). However, formal equality (indeed the kind of equality offered by comprehensive school system is nothing but formal), in treating non-equals as equals, is far from producing such results. Rather it has to be seen as a perfect instrument of maintaining existing differences in the student population. Such differences will appear within a class between pupils, between classes at the same level of schooling, between schools, and between regions. Thus the comprehensive school (or any other system of formal equality) represents a generalised system of maintaining all the differences existing in society - even if these differences are undergoing changes in the long run. The school system of the former GDR was no exception to this rule.

It has to be said, though, that it took the GDR 25 years to achieve a comprehensive system with formal equality up to the age of 16 (and only 16). The major part of GDR school history is characterised by institutional differentiation (MENDE 1970; WATERKAMP 1985), and children with special needs have always remained outside the institutional framework of the comprehensive school. Apart from that, varying emphasis has been given to special education for the so-called highly gifted, and an important sector of highly selective educational courses for them (mainly as extra-curricular activities) has always existed in the former GDR.

It is noteworthy that in response to a major economic and social crisis at the beginning of the 1980s the authorities in the GDR initiated an educational reform which put the idea of 'individualisation' at the centre of educational ideology and strategy. Concepts of extensive differentiation, promotion of individual talent, particularly in mathematics, German as a first language and Russian, programmes for the highly gifted, supplementary courses in non-compulsory subjects, tendencies of an individualisation of teaching and learning inside the comprehensive school system increasingly gained importance in the 1980s and became keywords of an internal debate on desired changes. In this respect the curriculum reform initiated in 1982 and a major overhaul of the entire educational system begun early in 1989 (NEUNER et al. 1987; KIRCHHÖFER et al. 1989a; KIRCHHÖFER 1989b; KIRCHHÖFER 1991; KIRCHHÖFER 1994) deserve particular attention.

- *Political vs. depoliticized education.* The construction of „socialism“ in the GDR was regarded as presupposing the active participation of the working class. However, according to the Marxist-Leninist dogma a „socialist“ political consciousness did not develop automatically and it became then the task of the „vanguard“ (party, trade union, youth organisation leadership) to educate the masses in a way that they identified with the „socialist“ cause. Schooling was an important element in the process of political education

(e.g. KLEIN/REISCHOCK, pp. 32ff.) and a „correct“ political standpoint was actually made one of the basic criteria for admission to higher levels of the secondary and post-secondary education levels. Political education was not just a matter of specific subjects but penetrated the entire range of subjects taught at school, including the natural sciences. At the same time it was generally criticized that school education in West Germany rested on assumptions of a non-political, non-partisan character of the curriculum. This was seen as largely hypocritical and as hiding the political substance of teaching and learning.

It has been argued that the claims of the East German leadership to disposing of specific insights into the functioning of society and thus having a specific advantage over the rest of the population, including the duty to politically educate it, arguably represented a form of modern superstition (SANDER 1983). The knowledge embodied in the theory of Marxism-Leninism contrasts sharply with the social realities of the Eastern branch of capitalism and produces a kind of ignorance which makes it impossible to understand the functioning and the development of the respective societies. However, this is still a minor though not completely unimportant point, throwing some light on the alleged ability of the ruling classes to plan and direct the construction of „socialism“. More importantly, the Eastern ruling classes were unable to consciously influence the course of history, being constantly pushed towards destroying the very foundations of a positive development for their societies. This is what the leadership of the GDR did with an untiring effort, thus permanently sabotaging any possible effects of political education for constructing a „socialist“ society.

- *Curricular integration vs. separation of general and vocational education.* When the GDR began adding two more years to compulsory schooling, thus raising the school-leaving age for the vast majority of pupils to 16 years, it became an urgent matter to reorganise the curriculum for the last two years. Previously these two years had been spent on vocational education and a minority of school leavers had already entered the workforce at this age. It did not seem feasible under the circumstances to simply push forward the beginning of vocational education to the age of 16. Hence a vast debate was triggered off in the second half of the 1950s focusing on concepts of how to integrate general and vocational education and more specifically education and work, claiming to put principles of polytechnical education into practice as they had been sketched by Marx (e.g. KLEIN 1962; GÜNTHER/UHLIG 1970)

Undoubtedly knowledge continued to be organised and transmitted in the East German educational system in ways that made the acquisition easier for some social groups rather than others. The separation of general and vocational education has always been the cornerstone of such a system, and it was in fact never abolished in the former GDR (MESSMER 1982; MESSMER 1984; MESSMER 1986; WATERKAMP 1985). In addition it required certain kinds of cultural supports to succeed within the educational environment that was both socially and individually selective. These are the cultural supports that have been strongly associated with the intelligentsia, i.e. middle-class families stressing individual achievement as the road to personal salvation.

A very instructive case is the experience of polytechnical education being at the centre of a major attempt to integrate school and production, learning and work, general and vocational education, theory and practice. One of its basic aims was to overcome the dual system of preparing in different, separate streams of formal education for manual jobs/clerical jobs on the one side and for professional jobs/management jobs on the other. The attempt failed in the end (MESSMER 1974; MESSMER 1990; BRAMHOFF/WOIDTKE

1974; VOLLAND 1990; MESSMER 1991) since neither was it possible to introduce a polytechnical dimension into *all* subjects (polytechnical education as an additional subject) nor could theoretical and educational aspects of work be sufficiently developed. With more and more emphasis being put on engineering and technology - and increasingly so in the context of the so-called scientific and technological revolution - polytechnical education quickly became integrated into the prevailing culture, which was a culture of social discrimination against the working class. As a result general and vocational education remained clearly separate even in a crucial phase when the comprehensive school system was extended beyond grade 8 to include grades 9 and 10.

In the former GDR claims to emancipation through schooling rested mainly on what was regarded as the nature of a socialist society and very much on matters of content (i.e. the supposed quality of Marxism-Leninism as a scientific theory). It was not seen as a contradiction to „socialist democracy“ that this content - in fact a primitive functionalist sociology - had to be and was in fact inculcated into the heads of the vast majority of the younger generation and that this was bound to entail consequences like hierarchical structures in school, a dominant role of teachers and very much ritualised communication processes in the classroom (not to speak of the inefficiency of ideological education) (GLÄBER 1990; HOFFMANN 1990; HOFMANN/TIEDTKE 1990; GIESSMANN 1991; FAUST 1991; WATERKAMP 1986). At the same time it is hardly ever understood by educationalists that manipulative learning environments, just by their being manipulative, could produce a variety of counterproductive effects on the part of young people, including an interest in rebellion and self-emancipation. This of course complicates any discussion about whether school in the former GDR did promote self-consciousness, self-regulation and emancipation or not.

Instead of representing a fundamental alternative to West Germany, education in the GDR was based on and part of a wider social system defined by class antagonism. The development of class antagonism determined the transition from school to work and the labour market, curriculum content and teaching/learning processes and the availability of funding for education in ways which did not differ fundamentally from the situation before 1945. This is not to deny that there were indeed differences, perhaps even essential and far-reaching differences, between the educational systems of the former GDR and the old FRG before 1989. Research has so far preferred to concentrate on purely imaginary differences, while real differences have to be seen as an area which has been almost completely neglected. For Comparative Education in East Germany, however, the realities of class-based schooling at home were shrouded in a fog of ideology, legends and inventions serving no other purpose but a propagandistic one. It never ceased to be a faithful and loyal servant to the interests and political strategies of East German capitalism pursuing Cold War policies.

### 3. The politics of Comparative Education in West Germany

#### 3.1. Facing the East German enemy: The alleged success of communist political indoctrination in and through the education system

Comparative Education in West Germany mirrored rather exactly the positions which were held by colleagues in East Germany with regard to the enemy. Although the worst excesses of denouncing the East German education system for its totalitarian tendencies, placing it at the same level as the education system of Nazi Germany, date back to the early 1950s, there was a continuity of research in the spirit of Cold War policy up to 1989 and beyond. The one institution initiating, producing and freely distributing an almost endless flood of Cold War



propaganda was the Bundesministerium für Gesamtdeutsche Fragen, a federal ministry of the FRG claiming to have responsibility for Germany as a whole and in particular for the reconstruction of East Germany after its return into the fold of Western style „democracies“. Among the many pieces it produced were e.g. a booklet on „Deutsche Kinder in Stalins Hand“ (German children in the hands of Stalin) by an anonymous author (BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR GESAMTDEUTSCHE FRAGEN 1951), a book on „Das Erziehungswesen der Sowjetzone“ (The education system of the Soviet zone) containing documents on the „sovietization“ and „russification“ of the „central German“ school system (BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR GESAMTDEUTSCHE FRAGEN 1952), a booklet on „Deutsche Jugend im Wirkungsfeld sowjetischer Pädagogik“ (German youth under the influence of Soviet pedagogy) (DÜBEL 1953), a book on the „Freie Deutsche Jugend“ containing reports and documents on the development and the activities of the East German youth organisation (HERZ 1957), a booklet on „Die Gleichschaltung des Kindes. Die Pionierorganisation in der SBZ als Instrument der Bolschewisierung“ (The domestication of the child. The organisation of young pioneers as an instrument of bolshevisation) (BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR GESAMTDEUTSCHE FRAGEN 1959b), a booklet on „Die Entwicklung der Lehrerbildung in der SBZ seit 1945“ attacking the development of teacher education in the Soviet zone (WENDT 1959), a book on „Pädagogik des Fortschritts? Das System der sowjetzonalen Pädagogik in Forschung, Lehre und Praxis“ spreading the wildest phantasies about the system of pedagogy in the Soviet zone (MIESKES 1960), and a range of booklets on different levels and types of schooling, in particular „Das Schulwesen in der Sowjetzone“ (The school system in the Soviet zone) (BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR GESAMTDEUTSCHE FRAGEN 1960a/6), „Das Berufsschulwesen in der Sowjetzone“ (Vocational education in the Soviet zone) (BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR GESAMTDEUTSCHE FRAGEN 1960b/3), „Das Fachschulwesen in der Sowjetzone“ (BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR GESAMTDEUTSCHE FRAGEN 1958), „Universitäten und Hochschulen in der Sowjetzone“ (Universities and other higher education institutions in the Soviet zone) (BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR GESAMTDEUTSCHE FRAGEN 1964/4), „Die Pionierorganisation Ernst Thälmann in der Sowjetzone“ (The organisation of young pioneers in the Soviet zone) (BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR GESAMTDEUTSCHE FRAGEN 1959a/3). However, there was a very vast range of institutions producing propaganda in exactly the same vein.

The test case for the political orientation of Comparative Education was the movement of emigrants („refugees“) from East to West Germany, and this is a problem which is interesting enough to deserve a separate study. Out of roughly three million emigrants from East Germany between 1950 and 1969 roughly one and a half million were younger than 25 years. The vast majority was first transferred to special refugee camps and was then subjected to a painful procedure of ideological screening and interviewing for the purposes of the Secret Service before being allowed to settle permanently in West Germany. The reception was felt to be such by many emigrants that a growing number of them (up to 20 per cent in the first half of the 1950s) preferred to return to East Germany after a while, knowing fully well that they would not be welcomed back enthusiastically by the East German authorities and the Staatssicherheitsdienst upon their return. The general attitude they met with in West Germany upon their arrival could well be characterised by the following statement made at a conference in 1955 dealing with problems of young „refugees“:

„Through their education behind the Iron Curtain young people have been deprived of many important conditions and means for winning this personal fight [for an integration without problems into West German society]. It is a fact that the propagandistic education of East German youth could claim full ideological success only for a small minority but there are areas in which this success proves to be incredibly great. It has to



be registered by us that antireligious propaganda has led to a vast majority taking a rigid stance against christian dogma and against the churches. [...] In addition it has to be noted that a weakening of their conscience occurred as an overall effect of education, as it was directed at enforcing their recognition of the fact that the party is always right. The regime not only transformed them into unbelievers but also dehumanized and depersonalized them. It has taken all decisions for them, it has guided their thinking, it has paved the way for them, provided that they were on its side. It condemned any independent judgement, any initiative of their own, any original thought. A certain dumbness resulted from all this, at least for those who did not consciously acquire in an oppositional or at least a church-believing family the forces of resistance.

Unfortunately this is the case with most of the young people. When for one reason or another deciding to flee to West Germany, they are mostly found to be in a state of helplessness in the West, with a deep feeling of their own inadequacies and weakness, not being able to stand up to the challenges of daily life.“ (KAMPFGRUPPE GEGEN UNMENSCHLICHKEIT 1955, p. 78f. - my translation)

Quite clearly such interpretations ignored the fact that massive class struggles began to develop in East Germany in the 1950s producing a kind of autonomy and independence particularly for working-class youth which was unparalleled in West Germany. Also quite clearly such autonomy might theoretically be welcomed as expressing an opposition to the regime in East Germany but would have been regarded as being totally unacceptable in West Germany by those reasoning about the ideological situation and the unreliability of „refugees“. Thus, for example, the West German media hailed the East German uprising of in June 1953 (in which young people played a very prominent role) but were of course not prepared to regard this uprising as part of a wider class movement pulverizing assumptions about the successes of ideological indoctrination in East Germany. Similarly the events around the building of the wall in August 1961, the deep crisis of the regime in 1982 and finally the dramatic downfall of the regime in November 1989 were not put into the context of an analysis of class struggles gradually destroying a capitalist system but were widely seen in the latter case as the result of weekly demonstrations of church goers bearing candles and shouting slogans demanding German unification. The role and effects of struggles for autonomy had to be denied in order to be able to cling to traditional myths and legends depicting the East German (education) system as

- a monist and totalitarian system which was centrally planned and governed,
- depending completely on the aims, objectives and strategies of a single monolithic political party,
- characterised by an ideological practice based on a totalitarian ideology fostering hatred and ignorance,
- terrorizing an entire population into (passive) acceptance of this ideology and the leading role of the party,
- and requiring the intervention of outside forces, in particular from West Germany, in order to break the chains of subjugation to which the population was tied.

It is quite obvious that researchers in the field of Comparative Education believed in the unlimited power of the SED and its satellite institutions (in particular the trade unions and the youth organisation) in indoctrinating at will the vast majority of East German youth and subordinating it to their ideological strategies. Certainly there were numerous organisations and institutions being actively engaged in increasing the ideological influence of the party (see

e.g. SCHIMANSKI 1965). However, school education was seen as playing a very decisive role in indoctrinating young people and it was assumed to be extremely successful as well.

Comparative Education was so much convinced of the truth and correctness of this interpretation that even at the end of the 1980s it was still repeating the same old worn out formulas of Cold War propaganda. In 1988 the federal government had commissioned a full-scale report which was meant to provide for the very first time a comprehensive picture of the education systems in East and West Germany, including general education, vocational education, special needs education and higher education. The voluminous report of 712 pages prepared with the participation of a large number of leading mainstream researchers in Comparative Education from West Germany was only published in 1990 (BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR INNERDEUTSCHE BEZIEHUNGEN 1990) and even at this time the authors clung to their phantasies about a totalitarian system and its pernicious influence on the younger generation in East Germany. While the report supplies a highly interesting profile of the ideological preoccupations and the political position of the contributors, it does not offer the slightest information helping us to understand why this system had just collapsed (SANDER 1992).

Undoubtedly the contributors had carefully read the minutes of party congresses and sessions of the politbureau and had no less carefully studied opening speeches of the minister for education at the major pedagogical conferences in East Germany, visibly also many other primary sources. But was it really enough to turn the propaganda speeches in praise of the purportedly omnipresent and omnipotent party on their head and read them as a massive charge against the allegedly successful dictatorial rule of the party, at the same time acknowledging implicitly the claims for having achieved full control of social developments as being entirely justified? Would it not have been more reasonable and indeed necessary for any analysis with critical intentions to investigate in detail first of all whether the SED had in fact succeeded in exercising full control in the education system, at the level of administering the education system and in the sphere of educational research?

It is rather unfortunate that on the side of Comparative Education the list of authors and titles showing a certain readiness for taking such simple questions into consideration does not fill more than two pages of widely spaced text, and the authors represent nothing but a tiny sect of dissident voices. Insisting on the phenomena of resistance to education and defence against curricular/cognitive assaults on the side of pupils (BRÄMER 1983a; BRÄMER 1983b), on the relative inefficiency of teaching in the natural sciences (BRÄMER 1980a; BRÄMER 1980b), on the dysfunctional effects of ideological education (BRÄMER 1978a; BRÄMER 1984), on the failure of polytechnical education as a strategy of social integration and control (MESSMER 1974), on the destructive role of discipline problems in the classroom (WATERKAMP 1988), on the generally non-permanent and unsatisfactory results of school education (WATERKAMP 1986), on the many reasons for producing instable and precarious interaction relations in the field of education (WATERKAMP 1984), on the fundamental impossibility of planning the education system (SANDER 1983), on the existence of a wide spectrum of competing definitions for general education under „socialism“ (BRÄMER 1978b), on the ideological vacillations and struggles in the history of education and in comparative education (MESSMER 1986; MESSMER 1984; MESSMER 1982) - insisting on all these conclusions based on careful and critical analysis, the dissident voices, although not speaking unisono, were united in their clearly refusing the theorem of central planning, governance and control as well as the theorem of the complete unity, absolute coherence and the admirable successes of the ideological and political apparatus of the GDR and the SED.

In denouncing the East German education system as a system of „communist indoctrination“ mainstream Comparative Education did express its fundamental conviction of being faced with a class-based form of education, always assuming that the West German system was not class-based. It did not hesitate a single second in showing that it had nothing but contempt for class-based systems in general and for the East German system in particular, of course being fully unaware of the class character of West German education. However, contempt was mixed with a certain awesome admiration for the incredible successes being ascribed to the ideological integration strategies of the party in the education sector. Thus Comparative Education showed no less respect for the dexterity of the East German ruling class in indoctrinating young people than colleagues in East Germany in their turn were willing to show for the dexterity of the West German ruling class in manipulating the younger generation.

### **3.2. Superiority of the West German battalions: The myth of pluralism and democracy**

On the West German side, no less than on the East German, there was a strong feeling over many decades and up to the present day that the two education systems represented fundamental alternatives. The basic alternative as seen from the side of West Germany consisted in the West German education system allegedly being impregnated with the values of pluralism and democracy, as a sort of vaccination against the dangers of totalitarianism. The self-image of the FRG was based on the firm conviction that its education system had broken with the traditions of fascism and had instead re-established solid links with the democratic tradition of the Weimar Republic (e.g. BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR GESAMTDEUTSCHE FRAGEN 1959c; LITT 1958; WILHELM 1963/3, pp. 488ff.). That implied a rigid refusal of what was seen as another variant of totalitarianism in East Germany. Rising from the ashes of nazism and from the uncertainty of the first post-war years surrounding the educational policy objectives of the Allies, the West German education system was thought to have been reborn as a shining example and a near-perfect model of an open, democratic and pluralist form of education.

As such it was regarded as being clearly superior to that of East Germany, and not a single day was there any doubt for Comparative Education that after re-unification there would be no other rational choice for East Germany but to adopt the West German model wholesale and copy it down to the last comma. The principal aspects of this belief in West German superiority were described hundreds of times by researchers through the following orientations:

- maintenance of a democratic, pluralist and open system in and through education policy, education and education research (vs. a monist and totalitarian system);
- defence of an unpolitical constitution of the education system, of education and education research, including basic independence from political actors and factors as guaranteed by the state (vs. complete dependence on the aims, objectives and strategies of a political party);
- adherence to principles of a non-ideological practice of education policy, education and education research (vs. ideological practice based on a totalitarian ideology).

It is difficult to ignore that fundamental political concepts like pluralism, democracy, open society, etc. are used by researchers in Comparative Education in a way as if their being applied in the descriptions of social conditions in West Germany was undebated and in fact undebatable. Usually the formalistic and liturgical use being made of these concepts is of a dogmatic simplicity which would probably create serious conflicts between authors of schoolbooks and the administrative units having to judge the quality of book manuscripts for use in schools. However, such banalities and empty formulas seem to be entirely acceptable once they are used by educational researchers.

There is absolutely no need to call upon very radical or otherwise suspect persons as witnesses if we need support for a massive critique of Western political systems with regard to pluralism and democracy. Norberto Bobbio, one of the most famous political scientists in Europe (and also one of the most famous living critics of Marx) has discussed the fundamental political problems of present-day capitalism under the heading of „broken promises of democracy“ (BOBBIO 1987, pp. 23ff.) - assuming of course naively that modern democracy did seriously promise something beyond imagined community. In spite of the generalisation of voting rights, the founding of mass parties and a rather high (though declining) political mobilisation systems laying claim to being a democracy have proved to be unable to translate such claims into practice. Bobbio's critique refers to three basic problem areas:

- Promises have not been kept with regard to *participation* (i.e. with regard to the guarantees of a collective and general competition in the process of taking decisions on common matters), as it is undercut by the presence of elites in the power structure and by the increasing political apathy of the many, with the proper representation of interests in mass organisations being manipulated, deformed and even made impossible in many ways.
- Promises have not been kept with regard to *control from below* (i.e. with regard to a principle based on the simple experience that any non-controlled power tends to produce misuse and corruption), as there has been a clear shift in possibilities of influencing centres of power in a way that citizens are at best allowed to control increasingly unimportant institutions but not the increasingly more important ones (e.g. big business, army, state bureaucracy).
- Promises have not been kept with regard to the *freedom of dissenting opinion*, as dissent could only be voiced within clearly and narrowly defined boundaries drawn according to the interests of the dominant economic powers and their ideological needs and not allowing for any radical alternatives to express themselves.

Undoubtedly this is to be considered as a very mild version of a critique of systems proclaiming individual freedom, democracy and pluralism as their most fundamental values. It is a critique leaving no doubt about the fact that it is brought forth by someone living basically in harmony with, and not in opposition to the present capitalist society. Other versions of a more radical kind would go much further than Bobbio. The „democratic“ state would be seen as being in opposition to bourgeois society and as a self-destructive mechanism. While striving for mediation between classes, its policies would in fact be regarded as a factor increasing the violence of struggles. The nature of mass parties in the modern „constitutional state“ of the FRG would be described as representing nothing but a pluralist version of a completely unified party system, pluralistic in the methods of governing the country but unified and monolithic in the sense of offering absolutely no perspective for real political change even with changing majorities in parliament (e.g. AGNOLI 1974; AGNOLI 1975). Or they would emphasize the integrationist character of political models based on the democratic illusion: The established parties finding themselves in a situation of oligopolistic competition for votes from the electorate do not cease according to this interpretation to exchange assurances of their being „democratic institutions“ and as such pillars of „democratic society“, thus documenting their fundamental and exclusive ability for taking over responsibility in a „democratic government“. It then becomes completely unimportant whether or not the functioning of such parties/governments still correspond to the classical model of delegated, representative democracy vis-à-vis the population and whether or not the internal organisation of parties satisfies the usual criteria of a democratic functioning giving members full rights of choosing themselves political objectives and strategies. Mutual recognition between party bureaucracies



defining at will the boundaries of the area of „democracy“ would suffice for their being able to fix the rules of the game.

Radical critique does not even stop at that point. It is rather widely accepted that contrary to the basic assumptions of the democratic model the centre of political power is not occupied by parliament but by the executive and its bureaucratic apparatus. The bureaucracy defends its autonomy not only against the parliament but transforms parliament itself into a subordinate administrative unit under bureaucratic control. Thus the executive turns out to be the major source of defining the boundaries for the „area of democracy“. In so doing it clearly stipulates the limits of political tolerance and political legitimation allowing the executive to discriminate, deligitimate and finally persecute anyone who dares to disagree with the executive bureaucracy, the cartel of parties and their particular interpretation of „democracy“, always being able to advance the argument of their having been identified as „antidemocratic“ or even „subversive“ elements.

This then implies the usual quidproquo of political elites in defining what should be considered as the „bonum commune“ in a society laying claim to being a democratic community. It becomes the first and major duty of political elites and bureaucracies to defend by all means the „democratic institutions“ against the „unreliable citizen“. Thus processes of legitimation as described in the context of the classical democratic model are turned on their head. The established parties and the state bureaucracies more and more develop an almost natural and automatic tendency of installing a huge apparatus of political surveillance and control as well as related „counterinsurgency“ tactics. It is regarded as their obligation and their right to find out by whatever means whether or not citizens are prepared to comply with the basic requirements and duties of protecting the existence and the functioning of „democratic institutions“. Citizens have to give them proof of their „constitutional“ positions while questions on the democratic character of institutions are strictly ruled out. It is in this sense that the modern „democratic“ state intervenes in class struggles although certainly not being able to successfully domesticate the activity of antagonistic parties in the struggles.

The delusive character of ideas and principles like pluralism and democracy did not prevent Comparative Education in West Germany from using them as instruments of propaganda in the Cold War. It was claimed that the education system of the FRG was characterised by self-regulation and social pluralism instead of strict guidance and control through a party dictatorship, by an orientation on the demand for education from the side of the population instead of state regulated and selectively rewarding system of allocating places at the higher levels of the education system according to the requirements of the labour market, by a gradual process of opening up promising school careers for everyone, with the prospect of promising careers in society, instead of an increasing social closure.

From such interpretations it could be concluded that the demand for education under conditions of a „liberal constitution“ of the education system is treated as an independent and autonomous factor, as if the dramatic rise of participation rates in education in the post-war period had had no other cause but the personal interest of individuals in receiving a better education. This is, however, a distortion of the simplest facts. The average school leaving age has changed in a way that it runs absolutely parallel to the gradually deteriorating situation on the labour market. From research commissioned by the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Wissenschaft we have learnt that the average school leaving age for young men was 17.8 years in 1961 but had risen to 21.1 years by 1985, while for young women there was a rise from 16.8 to 20.1 years in the same period (BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR BILDUNG UND WISSENSCHAFT 1990, pp. 21ff.). It was demonstrated by other researchers that with a cyclical decline of job



opportunities in the labour market the school leaving age increases with a certain time lag and that with a cyclical upswing the school leaving age decreases or increases less rapidly. Thus rising participation rates in the education system reflect nothing but an attempt to avoid the negative consequences of a long-term deterioration of the labour market, not the „free individual choice“ of a promising school career. The positive effects of such a change of participation rates on total job demand have had a considerable scope: According to the above-mentioned study for the federal ministry of education job demand fell by 2.5 million jobs between 1960 and 1985 as a result of an increased demand for education in the age group of young people under the age of 25 (excluding demographic changes and calculating only the increased social demand). Nevertheless unemployment of young people has steadily increased in the long run.

Comparative Education has coined nicely sounding phrases for these developments like a „separation“ of the education system from labour market developments, has diagnosed a „qualification surplus“ and has insisted on a strong tendency of „upward mobility in society“, thus suggesting that education system and occupational system are increasingly determined by different sets of factors. These are of course nothing but euphemisms for the education system having finally become an appendix to the occupational system and nothing but an appendix. The serious break between the education and occupational systems of which there has been so much talk in recent years does in fact not concern the mechanisms regulating the historical development of the system of education and training but the growing problems in the transition from school to work, the doubtful relevance of knowledge as acquired in schooling for the requirements made upon skills at the workplace and the declining value of certificates and diplomas for beginning occupational careers. As a result the education system has largely lost its former function of status distribution. Higher education does no longer automatically buy higher income and higher social status.

With the generous help given through the untiring propaganda efforts of Comparative Education the concept of a „liberal constitution of the education system“ has been sold as expressing a majority consensus with which fictions of a liberal, democratic and pluralist education system were transformed into fundamental social values having to be rigorously defended against any critical attacks „from outside“ and „from inside“. It did not matter at all for Comparative Education whether or not its theories reflected the social reality of capitalism in West Germany. Comparative Education researchers actually never understood that as an appendix to the labour market and its long-term development the education system had visibly become an important arena for class struggle and had at the same time been made fully dependent on the development of class struggles in the wider society, as mediated through the development of production and productivity and the resulting destruction of jobs (SANDER 1997). This found expression in the growing refusal of compulsory school education in particular on the side of working-class children and in the increasing degree of control pupils were able to gain over the daily routines of compulsory schooling. Neither political strategies of structural school reform nor initiatives of curriculum change have been able to stop this tendency.

## 4. Conclusion

Comparative Education in both East and West Germany has taken an almost incredible course in the post-war period, fully identifying with the aims and objectives of Cold War policies as practised by the superpowers and its respective allies and never tiring in producing the most phantastic propaganda stories about the enemy on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The

education system of the enemy was invariably seen as being class-based, while the system at home was regarded as being totally different, either expressing the values of imaginary „socialism“ or of imaginary „democracy“, both ignoring the realities of world capitalism. At the same time the education system of the enemy was admired and detested for its allegedly succeeding in manipulating and indoctrinating the younger generation, whereas the system at home was praised as having no other purpose than promoting individual emancipation through schooling, both ignoring the participation of young people in the ongoing class struggles inside and outside the education system. Implicitly the younger generation on the enemy's side was scorned for being so submissive and weak as it was understood to be so easily manipulated and indoctrinated but the younger generation at home was denied any right to protest and rebellion as it was believed that there was simply no manipulation or indoctrination to be rebelled against. This was, therefore, a truly pathological case of permanent and institutionalised scientific schizophrenia.

It is certainly impossible to ignore the causal nexus between the complete irrationalism of Comparative Education with regard to the education system at home and the wildly invented propaganda stories about the education system of the enemy. In producing comparisons of the two education systems in Germany and their supposed diversity Comparative Education had barricaded itself behind walls of an imaginary world in which it constructed the phantastic image of the superiority and the neat functioning of the education system at home. Painting the reality in black and white where it was neither black nor white, the education system at home was described as being fully opposed to that of the enemy. In order to be able to defend this unrealistic interpretation it became necessary to buy the self-fabricated illusions of the enemy as spread by the media and other institutions of propaganda, taking them completely serious where there was not the slightest reason in a critical perspective for doing so. Thus, a non-existent pluralism and democracy at home gained the status of a political norm and a political value to be defended by stereotyping the enemy's system as based on socialism/communism, monism, totalitarianism and dictatorship. Equally, a non-existent socialism/communism at home gained the status of a political norm to be adhered to and to be willingly defended by stereotyping the enemy's system as representing the most rigorous and brutal variant of a repressive capitalist regime. This kind of mutual assurance promised to function reasonably well as long as each side clung to its self-fabricated illusions and the propaganda about the education system at home and its wider social context.

As a result we are justified in concluding that the information value of Comparative Education studies in the two Germanies was zero in the post-war period, with extremely few exceptions to be made. Researchers on both sides continue up to this day to believe in living and working at home in a world without classes and class struggle. However, the reality of class struggle does not depend on their more or less elegant discursive practices or their more or less wild imaginations.

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